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# The interpretation of animation's signs and meanings from Southeast Asian cultures through 12 principles: Raya and The Last Dragon

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12 Principles of Semiotics

#### KEYWORDS

Animated Movie E Raya and The Last Dragon m

Disney is an animated movie studio that produces the most animated movies in the world. Raya and the Last Dragon is the first animated fantasy film that elevates Southeast Asian culture, including Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore. This animated film is depicted in Kumandra's land, which includes five regions, namely Heart, Fang, Spine, Talon, and Tail. Each region has distinctive characteristics that are expressed through verbal language and visual characters. The moving characters are adapted to dialogues and scenes that have a purposeful meaning and that can be analyzed using the 12 principles of animation. The result of this study is to analyze the motion of animation using 12 principles of animation, namely anticipation, appeal, arch, exaggeration, follow through and overlapped action, secondary action, slow in and slow out, solid drawing, squash, and stretch, staging, straight ahead action, and pose to pose timing. Signs and the meaning of motion are identified using Roland Barthes's theory of semiotics, namely denotation, connotation, and myth. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a case study paradigm and an interpretation approach to art criticism. The aim of this study is to understand the 12 principles of animation and the meaning of characters' motion in character scenes when conveying messages visually.

ABSTRACT

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# **1. Introduction**

Animation is the illusion of moving images formed from a collection of objects (images) that are stacked systematically following a predetermined flow of movement at each increase in the required time duration (Tambun et al. 2022). Animation is usually described as an animated movie with a plot and premise. Through the characters' visual and verbal language, as well as any conversation they may speak, the idea of the created plot can be expressed the 12 principles of animation are used to create the visual language that the characters communicate (Nadya and Sari 2019). The study found that the 12 Principles of Animation are the result of the translation of the laws of physics and realistic motion. Disney's 12 principles of animation were introduced to us by the animators Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas in their book The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation, which was first published in 1981. Through examining the work of leading Disney animators from the 1930s onwards, Johnston and Thomas boiled the studio's approach down to 12 basic principles of animation (Animation 2022). The 12



principles of animation include;

- Squash & Stretch: The principle that guides efforts to make a manufactured thing or character appear flexible. Flexible effects can be applied to both inanimate and animated things. In an animation, lifeless things are given the flexibility effect so they can move and appear to be alive.
- Anticipation: The preparation for an action. The idea that a character produced by an animator is taking a position or performing a preparatory motion is called anticipation. The animated motion of this character's stance also functions as a transition between the two moves.
- Staging: This principle highlights the general momentum of a scene, which must be shown in detail and clearly in order to make the audience understand the entire plot (Tambun et al. 2022).
- Straight Ahead & Pose to Pose. *Starlight a head*, which is a method of composing the animation motion sequentially from the first to the final image called "frame by frame." *pose to pose*, which is a method of composing motion animation that is only drawn on certain key frames; so Starlight a head, which is a method of composing the animation motion sequentially from the first to the final image called "frame by frame contrasting approaches to the creation of movement.
- Follow Through & Overlapping Action: is the termination of an action and establishing its relationship to the next action. Follow Through & Overlapping Action A basic animation principle that emphasizes the animated movement of other body parts that continue to move even after the body has stopped moving or is still. The animated motion of related but not concurrently moving objects or people is the fundamental idea behind the follow-through animation principle; (Animation 2022).
- Slow In & Slow Out: Animated movements are created to produce a realistic sensation of acceleration and deceleration based on the fundamental idea of slow-in and slow-out animation. An animation technique called slow in demonstrates how a movement begins slowly before accelerating, and slow out does the opposite.
- Arch: Visual path of action for natural movement. The fundamental idea of animation is that it gives the appearance of naturalism because characters such as people and animals move in patterns. This use of arcs gives the movement a more organic and fluid appearance.
- Secondary Action: a movement that occurs in addition to or as a result of the primary movement. The main movement's supporting motion, known as secondary action, becomes the animation's overall motion to make it appear genuine.
- Timing & Spacing: Timing refers to the idea of timing the action to be taken. Timing can also be used to calculate how many pictures, specifically between two, should be taken. While the principle of acceleration and deceleration in the motion of the created animation is called "spacing."
- Exaggeration: This emphasizes the dramatic and often hyperbolic nature of animation movement. This dramatic animation movement is given in the comedic animation genre because certain of these dramatic animation movements have a tendency to be overly exaggerated in some emotions.
- Solid Drawing: The animator's capacity to produce visuals is emphasized in this animation principle. Animation professionals need to be sensitive to anatomy, balance, weight, composition, and lighting in addition to possessing strong drawing technique.
- Appeal: principles related to the visual style of animation The audience will be able to recognize the novelty and source of the animation's creation thanks to the appeal animation principle (Thesen 2020).

These 12 principles of animation become the reference for animators to create realistic and life like movements. The more realistic the animation is, the more emotional the story can be conveyed to the audience. Raya and The Last Dragon, an animated movie that released by Disney. optimistic that because the movie is available online on Disney + Hotstar, it would draw people from their homes. The Raya and The Be Dragon Film, which will show on March 3, 2021, will last approximately 1 hour and 47 minutes. (Putri 2022). The animated "Raya and the Last Dragon" grossed \$8.6 million in the U.S. and Canada over the weekend, according to preliminary studio estimates, with the film appearing in 2,045 theaters throughout North America, Disney said (City and Watson 2021). This animated movie potreys Raya's adventures who struggle to reunite the 5 regions of Kumandra, namely Heart, Fang, Talon, Spine and Tail which are divided.(Agung, Sonia, and Sihombing 2022). Each region has a distinct culture, inspired by different places in Southeast Asia. The five areas are expressed through visual and verbal characters that create animated motion according to the needs or messages to be conveyed (Saraswati, Widhiyanti, and Galuh Fatmawati 2021).

Therefore, this animated film attracted the attention of researchers to look for signs and meanings using Roland Barthes' theory, namely denotations, connotations and myths of Southeast Asian cultural movements. Roland Barthes hardly studied what he often called built on a different system that already existed into a second-stage system of meaning. (Wibisono and Sari 2021). The second system of Roland Barthes is said to be "connotative", which is in his book Mythologies, he loudly distinguishes from the denotative or the first stage. 1. Signifier 2. Signified 3. Denotative sign 4. Connotative Signifier 5. Connotative Signified 6. Connotative Sign). (Wijayanto and Iswari 2021).

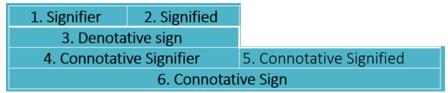
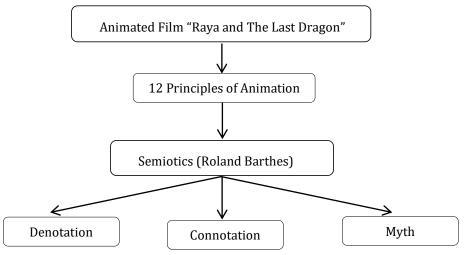
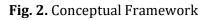


Fig.1. Roland Barthes Sign Map

From Roland Barthes's explanation, it is known that there is a denotative sign that consist of markers and signs. However, at the same time, the denotative sign is also a connotative marker. So Roland Barthes said the connotative sign not only has additional meaning, but also contains elements of both parts of the denotation sign that symbolize its existence. (Arafah and Hasyim 2020). The results of this study are expected to demonstrate 12 principles of animation and the meaning of motion animation.





Angelia Panjaitan et.al (The interpretation of animation's signs...)

## 2. Method

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive methodology and a special research paradigm of art criticism with an interpretation approach to describe in detail the signs and meanings of the animation motion of Raya and The Last Dragon from Southeast Asian culture. The aim of this study is to understand the 12 principles of animation and the role of character motions in character situations while visually communicating messages. This study used the following first belief research data source: unwritten data sources, namely in the form of visuals, dialogues, in animated movie are which in this case are used as data sources (Primary). Both written data, namely in the form of books, journals or research results related to the 12 principles of animation and the meaning of the animation motion. The analysis used in describing the meaning of motion animation through 2 stages, namely the first is through the study of art criticism 12 principles of animation and the second is the analysis of the meaning of motion by using denotation, connotation and myth.

### 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Raya and The Last Dragon

Raya and Last Dragon is an animated movie produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios and directed by Don Hall, Calos Lopez Estrada, Fig 3. The main cast in this animated movie are Kelly Marie Tran as the voice of Raya, Awkwafina as the voice of Sisu and Gemma Chan as the voice of Namaari. This movie is inspired by Southeast Asian culture consisting of anthropologists, architects, linguists, to music. The plot of this movie is the world of Kumandra, which depicts a tranquil nation existing side by side. However, 500 years later, evil powers disturbed the land of Kumandra, causing it to become separated into five nations: Heart, Fang, Spine, Talon, and Tail. The heart is the nation where Raya was born, the location of the dragon ball, and a place that is guarded against bad magic. However, for whatever reason, the dragon ball that contained the warding power of the dragons collapsed and broke loose, permitting evil magic to resurface and go on the rampage in numerous nations with Southeast Asian influences. (Fathanah et al. 2022)

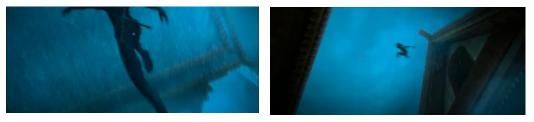


Fig 3. Disney + Hotstar Raya and The Last Dragon (2021)

#### **3.2.** Animation principle

• Squash & Stretch is animation principle that uses physics to emphasize particular items, as seen in the animated movie Raya and the Last Dragon. The Squash & Stretch animation

concept is used in the animated movie's jumping Raya scene. Fig 4 shows a character jumping with the right leg bent and the left leg crossed. Fig 4 shows the same character jumping with both legs bowed. Character animations that employ squash animation concepts are shown in Fig 4 and Fig 5.







While the character in Fig 6 lands with both hands lifted and its head dropped, the character in Fig 7 is sitting with its left foot in front of it and its right foot behind it while gazing forward. Fig 6 and Fig 7 are called character animations that use the principle of stretch animation.



Fig 6. Stretch

Fig 7. Stretch

- 1) Denotation: Animated jumping motion of a Raya character that uses the principle of squash and stretch animation when the character jumps the body leans forward, the left leg is bent, the right leg is straightened back and the jump lifts the leg. The character lands using the straight body stretch animation technique; the arms and legs are straight, and the right and left legs bend as they touch the ground
- 2) Connotation: The reason Raya's character is having trouble jumping while fleeing is that the adversary is pursuing her.
- 3) Myth: A movement technique used by the character that jumps high is to move through barriers swiftly and effectively. The art of jumping is called *Parkour*

Analysis: In this motion, the value of the great struggle to get through the obstacles to get the fragments of the dragon crystal stone is shown.

• Anticipation is a defensive move. Almost every character in Raya and the Last Dragon uses the notion of anticipation to begin a movement, which increases the realism of the animation. Fig 8 shows Raya holding a toddler she just met. In Fig 9, the infant is assuming a position to pull Raya's hat by reaching out with her arms and torso; her legs are straight to reach the hat.



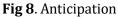




Fig 9. Anticipation

1) Denotation: Toddler animation movement uses the principle of Anticipation animation to get ready-or to line-up against Raya. The toddler's body is straight,

his hands are about to reach Raya's hat to attack Raya

- 2) Connotation: To cut for Raya or to line up against her, toddler animation movements employ the anticipation animation principle. The toddler is preparing to attack Raya by reaching for her hat while keeping his body upright.
- 3) Myth: The act of attacking Raya indicates that in achieving something good, there must be obstacles.

Analysis: In this motion, the Southeast Asian character is friendly with strangers by holding a toddler, but in fact the toddler is an obstacle to achieving Raya's goals.

• Staging is an additional movement that enhances the scene's mood or emotional intensity. Many moments in the animated movie Raya and The Last Dragon employ the staging animation approach by incorporating facial emotions. In Fig 10, monkeys adopt a shocked expression, the toddler adopts a frustrated or pitying expression. The staging in this moment is provided by the monkey character, who develops the emotional interaction between Raya and the young child.



Fig 10. Staging

- 1) Denotation: Character animation movement that uses the staging animation theory with character expression visualization. Figure 7 depicts a toddler's irate expression with his eyes fixed on Raya, whereas figure 8 depicts Monkey's expression as one of surprise at the toddler's eye orientation towards Raya
- 2) Connotation: The character's expression shows the feelings or which shows the monkey character's view of what Raya is saying
- 3) Myth: Expressions that are visually accompanied by ideas or facts that aid Raya in getting her point through to toddler

Analysis: Raya who gave an offer to the toddler and monkey made the toddler annoyed and interested, while the monkey was surprised by Raya's offer. This shows the value of negotiation or a smart strategy to join together to realize Raya's vision.

• Straight A head & Pose to pose: Straight a head is a coordinated motion. The pet Tuk-tuk character of Raya is animated using the straight a head approach in the animated movie Raya and The Last Dragon. The scenes in Fig 11 and Fig 12 moves to give the impression that it is rolling forward, right, left, or backward utilizing the straight a head animation concept.





Fig. 11. Straight A head

Fig 12. Straight A head

Pose to pose, Fig 13 and Fig 14, movements in one scene that perform movements with key frame images which are usually done with extreme movements that cannot be repeated, such as straight a head.

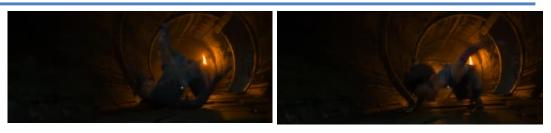


Fig 13. Pose to pose

Fig 14. Pose to pose

- 1) Denotation: The somersault movement of Raya's character uses the principle of pose to pose animation, which depicts the stance of Raya's body that seeks to avoid traps, in contrast to the straight head animation used by the Tuk-tuk character to signify a continuous movement
- 2) Connotation: The continuous motion of the tuk-tuk explains the absence of obstruction as it turns and walks. When Raya wants to walk carefully, the poses she takes on camera depict an obstruction or other distraction.
- 3) Myth: When stepping, movements that are carried out without difficulty and with ease indicate the lack of fear, whereas movements that are performed carefully indicate the presence of anxiety

Analysis: The character's movements show the importance of life when attempting to arrive somewhere, but there are also obstacles that require Raya's character to always be vigilant on her journey.

• Follow Through & Overlapping Action: Follow Through is the movement that moves even after the body or one of the limbs stops moving. The animated movie Raya and the Last Dragon features the movement of Raya's hair, which continues to move after the water drops pass through Raya, as depicted in Fig 15.



Fig 15. Follow Through

Overlapping action is a movement or criss-cross that has a different rhythm. Fig 16 illustrates how the dragon character in the animated film Raya and The Last Dragon moves, starting with its head, legs, torso, and tail.



Fig 16. Overlapping Action

1) Denotation: Raya's hair is animated and moves in the same direction as the water droplets that are going through it, even after the water has dispersed. the idea behind follow-through animation, which creates a realistic appearance, and the meaning behind how hair reacts to movement. While the dragon's overlapping movements suggest a varied rhythm of bodily movement, some of its limbs are still

moving while others have halted

- 2) Connotation: Character movement appears to be natural, which creates the sense that the character is dynamic. Natural movement refers to unprocessed, instinctive motion that includes reflex actions and happens without thought or analysis
- 3) Myth: Natural movements are made to give the appearance of a live character to achieve a body language message or movement reaction to affect other objects and produce new movements

Analysis: meaning on the movement of water over the Dragon Mark Kingdom is available, and the natural movements created in Naga and Raya are responsive to one another to offer the spectator a dramatic experience. This movement is like a prayer movement or a ritual performed by Raya to summon the presence of the Dragon. Southeast Asians are people who have strong belief values, so that when they want or reach a goal, there is a ritual or prayer action like what Raya did.

• Slow in & slow out: In the Raya and The Last Dragon animations, the toddler and monkeys jump hand in hand through Raya from above the head, as seen in Fig 17. Slow-in-slow-out movements are those that have quick and slow times. The monkey and toddler jump scene applies the principle of slow-in-slow-out animation so that the story conveyed is dramatic.



Figure 17. Slow in Slow out

- 1) Denotation: The animated movement of the toddler and monkey characters jumping over Raya's head uses the principle of slow-in-slow-out animation, which impresses and surprises Raya
- 2) Connotation: The slow in-slow out movement in this scene is to mock Raya from above Raya's head while jumping and waving
- 3) Myth: Dramatic movements are created to express messages in a beautiful rhythmic way. But the movement of jumping from the top of one's head signifies the value of impoliteness

Analysis: The jumping motion of toddlers and monkeys from above Raya's head gives the impression of disrespect for toddlers and monkeys to Raya. Because according to belief in is a sacred member of the body so that when crossed it signifies disrespect.

• Arch: natural motion or the reality of falling motion when showing a single-point twisting action such as a joint, Fig 18, and Fig 19. The majority of character movements, including those of Raya, the dragon, and other characters, use the arch animation principle.



Fig 18. Arch

Fig 19. Arch

1) Denotation: The animated movements of the Raya and Monkey characters using

arch give a natural impression when jumping, or flying in an arc

- 2) Connotation: The movement to form an arc or curved line is to create a real and realistic movement both when the highway and the monkey jump
- 3) Myth: The Great Leap and the monkey provide the jump distance from one point to the second, which follows the horizontal and vertical atmospheric motion

Analysis: The jumping movement, which employs the arch animation principle, implies that Raya's character, like monkeys, has good and well-trained jumping abilities. This is proven because the arc point is quite far and long.

• Secondary Action: occurs when a character makes more than two moves, such as looking to the right while walking or waving his hand. As seen in Fig 20 from the animated movie Raya and the Last Dragon, young children are pushing back while simultaneously lifting the jewels with their left hands and raising their fists. The main goal of this animation is to make the characters appear more real or alive through the use of many scenes.



Figure 20. Seconary Action

- 1) Denotation: Character animation movements using the principle of secondary animation are movements that follow the direction of joint motion by activating various movements of other body organs.
- 2) Connotation: The motion of this character animation is meaningful and provides more information than every movement that is activated by the character's limbs.
- 3) Myth: The limbs can move actively and passively, and when motion is created for speech or scenes, active and passive movements are used to communicate messages or information. To prevent the epidemic, a young child raises a crystal ball.

Analysis: The movement of lifting the crystal ball upwards assisted by the monkeys seemed to signify success and heroism to save the community from the plague.

• Timing is technical to decide which images to use. The animation principle is used in the animated movie Raya and the Last Dragon, where you have to modify the rhythm or editing beats from one scene to the next and from one scene to the next. An illustration of the timing animation technique may be seen in Fig 21, where Raya pays respect and is struck by a powerful wind as the dragon approaches..



Fig 21. Timing

1) Denotation: As a result of the scene's sluggish editing rhythm or pace, Raya's hair is dramaticly blown back when the dragon appears. The rhythmic ambience the dragon creates makes its walking motion appear slow

- 2) Connotation: Timing helps the viewer's receptivity last longer for information conveyed through slow motion character animation
- 3) Myth: Slow timing or Slow motion indicates the information conveyed is important so that the audience can understand the words and visualize well

Analysis: The slow motion timing movement signifies the arrival of an important Dragon, this is conveyed visually so that the audience understands the presence of the Dragon.

• Exaggeration is the use of exaggerated motion to convey action and emotion to the viewer. Fig 22 shows the exaggeration animation method being used with exaggerated movement or expression in the animated movie Raya and the Last Dragon. Since the actual monkey couldn't jump that far, Fig 21 depicts an extremely long jump by the monkey. This is done to make sure the audience sees the motion of the children and monkeys running quickly.



Fig 22. Exaggeration

- 1) Denotation: The monkey character's movements describe long jumps as expressive for fast escape.
- 2) Connotation: Fast sprinting and jumping made it clear that the monkey and the child did not want to be caught and were able to flee
- 3) Myth: Running away with excessive action indicates the character is doing something wrong and doesn't want to be caught

Analysis: Excessive movement or expressions of the desire to flee by monkeys suggest that they are panicked and in a hurry, which psychologically encourages the monkey to jump very far.

- Solid Drawing: The solid drawing animation principle is used in the animated movie Raya and the Last Dragon because the characters are distinct and the details are the same in every scene, making it simple to identify the characters. As 3D animation resources can be used again over numerous scenes, this animated movie also uses 3D animation.
  - 1) Denotation: Animations drawn with solid drawing provide the same character visualization information from beginning to end so as not to confuse the characters
  - 2) Connotation: The meaning of this animation principle is consistency in image and synchronization
  - 3) Myth: Consistent indicates that the tale is developed for the audience and that the characters depicted continue and are in line

Analysis: Characters from The Last Dragon movie and Raya have a distinct, well-defined image. Consistency provides understanding and memory of the audience does not change.

- Appeal: Each character in the animated movie has a unique personality that matches the plot. For instance, take the role of Raya, a young woman who is headstrong and sophisticated for her age. The image of Raya's character features long hair, tan skin, and a predominance of brown clothing. Characters are built using harmonious visual components and qualities.
  - 1) Denotation: Appeal's animation principles provide strong characteristic information on Raya's characters
  - 2) Connotation: The meaning of appeal in animation is that the characters and

information conveyed are in one line and easy to understand and remember by the audience

3) Myth: Appeal is an animation principle that must be built in animation to create identity on each character, both visually and behaviorally, so that the audience will remember the character and it will live on for a long time

Analysis: Visualizations and prominent characteristics like skin tone, long hair, and a warrior attitude play a part in developing a strong character. The characteristics of the route are sufficient to show Southeast Asians.

## 4. Conclusion

The results of this study lead to the conclusion that the animated movie Raya and the Last Dragon uses denotation signs of animated motion, expression, and rhythm that are read through the 12 principles of animation to deliver a message. Connotative meaning, which emphasizes the significance of information communicated by motion, and character expressions are all ways of communicating messages and information. The term "character movement" is used to describe and convey information about the Kingdom's efforts to bring the nation of Kumandra together. The myth that is created in the animated movie Raya and the Last Dragon is that character motion and facial expressions explain Southeast Asian characters who live their daily lives in accordance with the customs and traditions that are upheld by uniting the dragon balls in order to bring peace and harmony to the land of Kumandra. In relation to the development of the message and information to be communicated to the audience, the characters' movements and facial expressions are examined.

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